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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002033

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2013

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SUBJECT: ZCTU OFFICIALS ARRESTED AT GATHERING POINTS -
DEMONSTRATIONS QUASHED BEFORE BEGINNING

REF: HARARE 2006

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

[1](#)1. (U) On October 8, Police arrested forty-one members of Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in Harare, five in Bulawayo, one in Masvingo, one in Chinhoyi, and reportedly one hundred in Mutare. The ZCTU members were gathering to protest high taxes, escalating costs for transport and other necessities, cash shortages, and violation of trade union rights by the GOZ. The Harare arrestees included ZCTU Secretary General Wellington Chibebe, Chairman Lovemore

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Matongo, and Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe President Raymond Majongwe. ZCTU did not announce its intent to demonstrate.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) was coordinating legal representation for all of the arrestees nationwide. Arnold Tsunga, ZLHR Director, said that police had not filed any charges yet, and could hold the arrestees legally for forty-eight hours before filing charges or releasing them. Tsunga said that police had assaulted two of the arrestees in Harare, however, the group was in good spirits at Harare Central Police Station waiting to be handed over to the notorious Law and Order Section.

COMMENT:

[1](#)3. (C) Although no charges have been filed yet, we would expect police to do so under the Draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA) in the coming days. It would not be surprising if many of the arrestees, if not all of them, were held for the full forty-eight hours before appearing before a judge for charges to be filed. This waiting period in a Zimbabwean jail cell with all its discomforts viewed as punishment in and of itself. With the shutdown of the Daily News and reduced media scrutiny, the government can be expected to be more confident in undertaking similar suppression efforts against its critics.

[1](#)4. (C) Although bearers' cheques were recently introduced alleviating the cash shortage, and fuel has effectively been deregulated--inflation has jumped in the past two weeks (Reftel) and ordinary Zimbabweans still have trouble affording the basics and finding a ride to work. While there are many reasons to protest, there is no indication yet that large numbers of ordinary Zimbabweans actually heeded the call to march.

SULLIVAN